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TAGS: AORC PREL KNNP IAEA JA SF
SUBJECT: IAEA/DG RACE: MINTY PUSHING FOR JUNE VOTE

REF: UNVIE 55 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Geoffrey R. Pyatt for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) Summary: With the date for an election of the next IAEA Director General still undecided, South African candidate Abdul Minty has told us that in line with his campaign plan he will push to defer any vote until June -- which would be too late to develop a new slate of candidates in the event of deadlock. Japan, the US and other like-minded are pushing for a March vote that would put this divisive debate behind us. Even with delay, Minty is unlikely to reach two thirds. End Summary.

¶2. (C) With the timing of a vote on the next IAEA DG still undecided, Western countries supporting Japanese Governor Amano continue to express consternation at the Board Chair's failure to schedule a Special Session to hold a formal vote on the DG race during the March 2-6 Board of Governors. France and Australia are among the most outspoken in questioning the Board Chair's motivations. Many suspect that Algerian Board Chair Feroukhi is bowing to pressure to delay from those supporting South African Governor Abdul Minty. In a private conversation with Msnoff February 11, Minty argued that a Board vote should not be held until June, citing U.S. efforts to delay the 2005 re-election of DG ElBaradei. (Note: Board precedent is to hold at least a first round of voting in March to allow time, in the event of deadlock, for a new call for nominations. This was the case in 1997 when ElBaradei emerged as a compromise candidate in the second round of nominations. End Note.) Minty said he has premised his entire campaign on a June vote and is bitter about pressure from Amano supporters to call an "early" vote. (Comment: Under the Rules of Procedure, June is the deadline for a Board decision, so holding a first vote in June is impractical. End Comment.)

¶3. (C) Feroukhi, who is currently away from Vienna, has not informed Board members of any decision on a date for a Special Session, and has also kept the Secretariat staff in the dark, though they have tentatively scheduled the IAEA Board room for March 26. She will conduct her usual round of regional group consultations for the March Board on February 16-17. Mission is working with Japan and other like-minded counterparts to advocate setting an early March date during her February 16 WEOG consultations, unless the Board Chair preempts us by announcing a date before then. Russian diplomats, meanwhile, have begun to tell counterparts that

they would prefer delay until June. As reported reftels, the like-minded continue to press the Board Chair on this issue. In a meeting of EU3 1 DCMs February 11, the German DCM privately cautioned that we risk creating a North-South conflict over this secondary issue of the date, and wondered if it was worth doing so. France strongly disagreed, arguing that it was perfectly reasonable and consistent with Board precedent to request a date during the March Board when out-of-town Governors are also present in Vienna. The French DCM attributed any delay to lobbying by the Minty camp and noted that Minty does not have the blocking 12 votes needed to prevent an Amano election. Delay will increase pressure on African Union (AU) members, in particular, who might be disposed toward Amano, he added, though South Africa has a propensity to over-estimate the value of NAM support for its candidates. The French also continue to suspect that the Board Chair may be fronting for ElBaradei, though they acknowledge that the IAEA Statute would not allow for a one-year extension of his term.

¶4. (C) With regard to the "fence-sitters," the German DCM cast India as undecided but believed that Russia may be leaning toward Minty. No one had any particular insight on how Asian NAM Board members like Malaysia and The Philippines might be voting. German DCM also relayed the perception that most Board members are supporting Amano for political reasons though they believe Minty is more capable. Charge commented that while the U.S. has a high regard for Minty and what he represents in post-apartheid South Africa, he would not be the right person to lead the Agency after ElBaradei's highly politicized tenure as DG. All agreed that a deadlock in the first round of voting would not simplify the situation for our interests, and more likely would generate a plethora of aspirants, none of whom would command easy consensus. EXPO Director Vilmos Cseverny likewise predicted to Charge that if the slate is wiped clean, the current two-man race will turn into a "circus." None of this serves the U.S. interest in keeping the IAEA focused on tough technical challenges in the Middle East and elsewhere.

PYATT